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Letter dated 4 March 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit an address to the nation by Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, on the lifting of the state of public emergency on Friday, 1 March 2002 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim M. **Kamara**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 4 March 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Address to the nation by His Excellency the President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on the lifting of the state of public emergency

1 March 2002

Fellow citizens:

I have good news for you all. In fact I should say I have good news for all of us, two pieces of good news. Since all news is not the same, and because these are so special, I believe I should start by giving you the background.

No one, and I mean no one, would deny that for almost 10 years there was a human tragedy in our country. Some called it a civil war. Others described it as a rebel war. For others it was just another armed conflict in one small corner of the African continent. We knew that whatever its name, it was a terrible and devastating war.

Fellow citizens, this is not the time to assess the magnitude of our loss in terms of innocent lives, limbs and property. Indeed, this is not the time to try to express in words the trauma that victims of the war have experienced and will continue to undergo for years to come.

Let's put it this way. During that tragic period in our history life was not always normal for the average Sierra Leonean. There was not only a threat to peace, but there were also actual and sometimes heinous breaches of the peace. There was actual breakdown of public order and safety in many parts of the country. Who can deny that there were instances of armed incursion into our country from abroad? And who can deny that, on several occasions during that period, there were attempts not only to politically destabilize Sierra Leone, but also efforts to wipe out its entire population.

Fellow citizens, those were extraordinary circumstances, circumstances that required extraordinary measures. We had the moral right to respond appropriately in defence of the safety and security of our people. This is why I always say that a war was waged on us, and we merely responded in self-defence. Of course, as a democracy — and we are proud of it — we cannot take extraordinary measures arbitrarily. We had to respond within the supreme law of our country, namely the Constitution. This was why we invoked the appropriate provision of the Constitution and declared a state of public emergency.

As you all know, over the past several months life for thousands of our people has been gradually returning to normal. There have been positive and significant developments in the overall situation in the country.

On 18 January this year, we marked the end of the disarmament and demobilization process. Although we are still faced with the important and expensive task of reintegrating ex-combatants into society, we can all breathe a sigh of relief that the armed conflict is over. Civil institutions of governance are being re-established in all areas previously occupied by armed non-State elements. Our own restructured armed forces are now deployed in strategic positions throughout the

country, armed with, among other things, a new sense of loyalty to the nation. Our restructured police force is progressively being equipped with the wherewithal for enhancing safety. Moreover, the police have a new vision of their responsibility to earn the respect of law-abiding citizens.

I cannot end this portion of my message without paying tribute to our armed forces, the United Kingdom, the police and other institutions, as well as ECOMOG, UNAMSIL and the CDF, for their contributions to our collective effort in making this country safer and more secure than it has ever been, at least in the past five years.

Fellow citizens, here is the first piece of good news.

In view of these positive developments, and the prospects for further improvement, I am happy to declare that the conditions for maintaining extraordinary measures for security and public order in Sierra Leone no longer exist.

Accordingly, the state of public emergency is lifted with immediate effect.

That is not all. I also have another piece of good news. And I will appeal to each and every one of us to listen to it carefully.

The lifting of the state of public emergency is not a licence for any group of persons to take matters into their own hands. Law and order will be maintained and maintained vigorously. The armed forces, the police and other State security institutions will continue to do their job, and will remain vigilant. We shall not tolerate any attempt to disrupt the peace, security and safety of the State of Sierra Leone and its peoples. Primary responsibility for security and safety lies with the armed forces, the police and other national security institutions. However, I must emphasize that individual citizens also have a responsibility. As our Constitution says, every citizen of Sierra Leone should "render assistance to appropriate and lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order".

Our response to any threat or imminent threat within our borders, or from any external element, will be swift, robust and decisive. We are not going to take anything for granted. Of course, as a democracy and a member of the community of nations, our response will always be in accordance with the laws of this country, and our rights and obligations under international law.

Let no one underestimate our capacity and determination to take appropriate measures, and extraordinary measures if and when necessary, to ensure the safety and security of our people.

Fellow citizens, these are the two pieces of good news I wanted to share with you.

Let me close with this timely and relevant question. My dear people, haven't we had enough violence in our country?

Let us all reflect on this question as we spread the two pieces of good news I have just announced around the country.

Thank you for your attention.